



City of Somerville

Job Creation & Retention Trust

Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager
Trustees
Thomas Bent
Jesse Clingan
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Thomas F. Galligani, Jr.
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Online via GoToWebinar platform

Date: May 18, 2021

Time: 6:04 pm

Attendance

- Trustees: Vickie Choitz, Anika Van Eaton, Rand Wilson, Colleen Moran, Tom Galligani, Tom Bent, Silvana Dinka, Lisa Cook
- Guests: Blake Roberts Crall

Meeting Minutes

1. Approval of April 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

- Vickie Choitz asked that the spelling of her name be corrected in the meeting minutes
- Motion to approve the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes made by T Galligani and seconded by T Bent
- The motion was approved by roll call vote, unanimously, except for C Moran, who abstained, since she did not attend the April meeting.

2. Welcome new member – Colleen Moran

Trustees took turns introducing themselves and explaining why they enjoy being part of the JCRT. C Moran then introduced herself and described her professional background in workforce development.

3. Guest Speaker—Blake Roberts Crall of Somerville Community Corporation/First Source Job Program

- **Life Science Industry Initiative:** B Roberts Crall gave a presentation about an initiative started by the First Source Jobs Program as it relates to job opportunities in Somerville's emerging life sciences industry. First Source is partnering with the City Economic Development division, MassHire Metro North, and other partners to catalogue job opportunities in the life sciences and better understand what's required to match local residents with those jobs. While a number of these jobs require advanced degrees, about 10% of these jobs require only a high school diploma or an associate degree. To goal is to engage with life sciences developers and tenants to build relationships early-on to connect residents with these opportunities and to identify training programs to prepare residents.
 - R Wilson asked how much life science development is anticipated in Somerville. T Galligani noted that Somerville is anticipating millions of square feet of new life science development.
 - L Cook asked how Somerville residents can take advantage of these opportunities. B Roberts Crall indicated that its not clear yet, but the key is to build relationships early on. We do not yet know who which life sciences companies are coming to Somerville. She

mentioned local training providers like JVS, Just a Start and others who currently offer training for this industry.

- V Choitz asked if T Galligani could notify the JCRT about the timing for a follow-up report from the working group.
 - T Bent mentioned Flagship, who has announced that they're moving to Boynton Yards. T Galligani and B Roberts Crall mentioned they both meeting regularly with the developer in the hopes of building a relationship with Flagship.
 - S Dinka was pleased to hear that there are many opportunities for those without advanced degrees and encouraged hiring be focused on woman and minority candidates.
- **Job Training Scholarship Fund:** B Roberts Crall continued with a presentation about the need for funding for support for trainees during a full-time training program. Few can afford to support their family while involved in a full or part-time training program. This is a major barrier for many job seekers. There are training programs that offer additional support, but these are rare. B Roberts Crall provided a detailed memo that outlines a proposal for a scholarship fund to support Somerville residents.
 - L Cook asked about how this is different from MassHire funding. B Roberts Crall mentioned that MassHire funding pays for job training only (a voucher) and not life expenses. V Choitz mentioned that these funds are rare.
 - T Galligani mentioned that a Somerville High School student approached his office about sponsoring a life science summer internship with the Forsythe Institute. Would this proposed fund be a match? B Roberts Crall suggested that this is a good possibility.
 - S Dinka emphasized that parents have a difficult time attending trainings during the year—would summer be a better time for training? B Roberts Crall mentioned that this fund could support training opportunities throughout the year.
 - A Van Eaton emphasized the need for this approach—this is an equity issue for many of our residents. She is very interested in the Trust working on this type of program.
 - C Moran recognizes that this is exciting and a necessary innovation.
 - V Choitz mentioned that this is an innovative approach and results in excellent outcomes for similar programs that she's witnessed throughout in other parts of the country.
 - L Cook mentioned that the YouthBuild model includes scholarships and stipends for living expenses.

4. Amendment to the Declaration of Trust and Operation Procedures

V Choitz mentioned that a recent review of our Declaration of Trust and Operation Procedures revealed that the documents do not provide the Trust the flexibility to skip a monthly meeting. T Galligani reviewed a series of changes to the documents which would allow the Trust to set a more flexible schedule, while still ensuring that the Trust meet its obligations. After a discussion, the Trustees recommended further modifications, including removing the names of the Trustees from the Operation Procedures document.

- Motion to approve changes to the Declaration of Trust and Operation Procedures as proposed made by A Van Eaton and seconded by R Wilson.
- The motion was approved by roll call vote, unanimously.

5. Trust Grantees Progress Report

V Choitz introduced a presentation and status report about existing Trust grantees which were procured last year. Many of these programs will conclude at the end of the spring and summer. All these grants

were structured to allow the Trust to renew the contracts for up to two additional years. This presentation and review will prepare the Trust to consider a future vote to renew some or all these grantees.

- T Galligani and A Van Eaton walked through a presentation about the status of each of these grantees, including the Asian American Civic Association, Just A Start, Bunker Hill Community College, SCALE, Somerville Workers Center,
- T Bent asked when the program will end. T Galligani will include this information in a more comprehensive spreadsheet about grantees.
- T Galligani mentioned that Just A Start is providing a weekly stipends to trainees. Some of these trainees are facing the so-called benefits cliff effect (triggering a loss of existing benefits as the stipends push them “over the cliff” and towards voiding existing benefits). They proposed a workaround, by paying trainees with grocery gift cards. V Choitz and L Cook were enthusiastic about this approach.
- Many of the grantees have experienced challenges trying to provide training during Covid and have implemented a variety of strategies to keep programs running smoothly.
- L Cook described specific Covid-related challenges that SCALE is facing. SCALE is seeking an extension to their grant to allow them to complete training over the summer.
- V Choitz is concerned about the limited duration of worker training provided by the Somerville Workers Center—its only one hour long. She would like to see more robust training of workers that covers workers’ rights topics in greater depth.
- C Moran asked how wage theft is defined. R Wilson explained that it covers a range of practices that include asking workers to work through their lunch hour, paycheck mistakes and failing to pay employees.
- V Choitz asked that T Galligani send out the PowerPoint and supporting materials to the Trustees. The Trust may be ready to vote on extensions of some or all these contracts at future meetings
- T Bent asked to see how these grantees spent grant funds. T Galligani asked for clarification as information varies by grantee. Some of this information is contained in the grantee final report, which will be due at the conclusion of the contract.

6. Schedule of upcoming meetings

The next meeting will take place on June 8, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

- R Wilson asked if Royal Hospitality could be added to agenda for the next meeting.

7. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

8. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by R Wilson and seconded by V Choitz.
- The motion was approved by roll call vote, unanimously, at 8:14 pm

Meeting Documents

- Presentation to JCRT - Life Science & Scholarship Fund- Blake Roberts Crall 5.18.21
- Proposal - Job Training Scholarships Fund -Blake Roberts Crall 5.18.21
- JCRT Proposed amendments to Declaration of Trust and Operating Procedures Final
- Presentation - JCRT Grantee Mid Year Progress Report 5.18.2021 Final

Meeting minutes approved on June 8, 2021